



*Working together to strengthen democracy
in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin*

The Midwest Democracy Network is an alliance of political reform advocates committed to improving democracy in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. The Network includes state-based civic and public interest organizations, as well as prominent academic institutions and respected policy and legal experts.

The Network addresses the interconnectivity of political policies with a holistic reform agenda. Priorities include: campaign finance, election law and voting rights, judicial independence, media reform, open and ethical government, and redistricting.

WHY DO MIDWEST DEMOCRACY NETWORK POLITICAL REFORM ORGANIZATIONS CARE ABOUT THE 2010 CENSUS?

Every 10 years, the United States takes stock of itself. This inventory, mandated by the U.S. Constitution, aims to count every person living within our borders. The difficulty of accurately counting more than 300 million people is high; the impact of these census results is even higher.

The Midwest Democracy Network is a non-partisan alliance of political reform advocates in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. Our Network includes state-based civic and public interest organizations, as well as prominent academic institutions and respected policy and legal experts. We all share a belief in fundamental democratic values and principles — especially those that speak to honesty, fairness, transparency, accountability, citizen participation, competition, and the public's need for reliable information.

Organizations affiliated with the Midwest Democracy Network are committed to achieving a **complete and accurate 2010 census in our five-state region** because:

1) A complete and accurate count promotes active participation in government.

This is a moment in history when many people are excited about being an active part of our democracy. We have an opportunity to capture the energy of those mobilized for action in the 2008 election cycle to advance census turnout goals. By working to achieve a high participation in the census, we can continue building a civic engagement movement and foster involvement in democratic processes.

2) A complete and accurate count is critical to securing adequate resources for programs and services people count on in the Midwest.

The federal government relies on the census count to allocate almost \$400 billion in grants to states for many programs including: education, health, crime prevention and infrastructure. States use the census for allotting funds to counties and cities. To ensure these funds are distributed in our communities fairly, we need a strong count.

3) A complete and accurate count is essential to improving civil rights.

The 2000 census missed millions of people and double-counted millions more. While these “undercounts” and “overcounts” essentially canceled out each other at the national level, they affect different communities at the local level and have significant consequences. Minorities were disproportionately represented in those the Census Bureau did not count, diluting minority voting rights and reducing federal funds and government services to many low-income communities. Also, census data are often used in the monitoring and enforcement of compliance with civil rights and anti-discrimination laws. A robust count will create a more inclusive government.

4) A complete and accurate count means a stronger democracy.

The United States census lays the foundation for our government. We rely on census results to allocate the number of representatives each state can elect to the U.S. House of Representatives and determine the number of electors each state will have in the Electoral College. In the 2010 census, four of the five Network states are in danger of losing a congressional seat due to changes in population. These important numbers also provide the raw material for drawing district boundaries for our congressional, state, and local legislative elections. In order to have a properly functioning, accountable government, we must have a solid census foundation on which to build.

The U.S. Census Bureau has called for partnerships with community-based and social service groups to help ensure a complete count and we would like to answer that call by working in our communities as actively as possible to produce a complete and accurate census.